



News Release

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IDAHO WATER SUPPLY COMMITTEE
MEETS THURSDAY TO EVALUATE 2003 WATER OUTLOOK

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Will there be enough water to meet Idaho's needs in the months ahead or will water users around the state face water supply cutbacks and another year of potentially damaging drought?

Those are the flashpoint issues on the table Thursday (Mar 13) as experts with the Idaho Water Supply Committee meet to take a hard look at state's 2003 water supply outlook, the Idaho Department of Water Resources announced today.

The Committee will meet Thursday at 9:30 a.m. at the IDWR State Office, 1301 N. Orchard Street. The meeting is open to the public.

Thursday's meeting is especially critical because it comes at almost the end of the state's snow accumulation season. That is the point where scientists can begin to forecast water outlooks for the near 20 major river basins around the state.

Currently, every basin in the state is reporting below-normal levels in both snow pack and annual precipitation. Snow levels range from 98 percent of normal in the Salmon River Basin to 54 percent of normal in the Oakley Basin. Most of the state's storage reservoirs also entered the new year without any carryover water.

The water supply forecasts are used by a variety of Idaho water industries to plan business strategies for the coming spring and summer. The snow pack outlook coupled with reservoir storage data is critical to irrigation districts, canal companies and water districts that supply water to thousands of farmers around the state. River flow projections are also crucial to Idaho's whitewater tourism and recreational industries.

A good indication of how important the Committee's forward looking water supply information can be in these times of drought was the recent formation of a special Idaho Rangeland Drought Task Group.

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The group is part of the Idaho Department of Agriculture but will operate under the umbrella of the IDWR Idaho Water Supply Committee. It is designed to take the water supply information developed by the Committee and use it to address drought related issues on rangelands.

The intent of the Task Group is to facilitate coordination between the state and federal land management agencies and present possible alternatives and strategies to rangeland livestock producers to lessen the impacts of short water supplies.

The Water Supply Committee meeting on Thursday will be held in a facility that meets accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need assistance to attend, participate in or understand the meeting please contact Bill Ondrechen, 327-7988 in advance so arrangements can be made.